

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 1

THE NATIONAL GUARDIAN  
17 September 1980

# When it comes to military madness The myth of Soviet superiority

STAT

By KEVIN J. KELLEY  
*Guardian Correspondent*  
First of two articles

Washington, D.C.

Who's ahead in military strength—the U.S. or USSR?

The majority sentiment on the U.S. political spectrum now seems to hold that Washington is at best a precarious equal to Moscow in military might.

A smaller but quite vocal section of the ruling class even maintains that the Soviet military build-up of the past several years has reduced the U.S. to second rate status.

The election-year prescription being offered from moderate Democrats to hawkish neoconservatives is a crash "rearmament program" by the U.S. Virtually all the specific steps advocated to build the Pentagon's military machine this year are now being implemented: registration for the draft; deployment of the MX mobile-missile system; assemblage of a Rapid Deployment Force; development of a new fleet of nuclear-armed bombers, and a bolstering of sea warfare capabilities. All of this is to be financed by multi-billion dollar increases in the Pentagon budget that can only be obtained by proportional cuts in social spending.

This unrestrained militarism also involves some significant shifts in U.S. nuclear war policy and a general lessening of the chances for avoiding World War 3. Talk of arms limitation and detente is rarely heard here these days. The drive to "regain U.S. superiority" is well underway, its consequences both ominous and unconsidered.

Only a courageous few now question the central rationale on which this build-up is based. The terms and tenor of debate have shifted so far in favor of the hawks in the past couple of years that the underlying premise of an all-out Soviet military effort is seldom even questioned any more. It therefore seems essential to scrutinize what has become an axiom for all bourgeois politicians and for many liberals and a few leftists.

## BASIS OF CLAIMS

What, first of all, is the basis for the claim that the Soviet Union has outspent the U.S. significantly in the last few years?

It is certainly not the Soviet government, which consistently maintains that it is not engaged in any push to become the top superpower. In claiming that it seeks only parity and thus security, the Soviets point to their published figures on defense spending which represent, in dollars, about one-fourth of the U.S. annual expenditure. Allegations that the USSR is actually spending more than the Pentagon are routinely denounced by Moscow as "malicious falsehoods."

Confirmation for the claim of enormous Soviet military outlays does not come from somewhat impartial analysts such as the London-based Institute for Strategic Studies and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The British research institute refuses to affix any firm dollar figure to the Soviet defense program, explaining that any estimate would be based on large amounts of guesswork. SIPRI meanwhile acknowledges that "the scale and momentum of Soviet military activities are scarcely modest." But, the Swedish group adds, precise computations are "very uncertain" and "lack credibility."

Even sections of the U.S. government are reluctant to certify the huge sums that have been attributed to the Soviet military machine. In an October 1979 report on world armament expenditures, for example, the State Department's Arms Control and Disarmament Agency points out that "estimates of this type probably overstate the relative size of

CONTINUED